To whom it may concern:

As a person who's been involved in computing for over 20 years, I'm quite disappointed with how little progress has been made in the area of usability. I've been a longtime Mac enthusiast, largely because Apple Computer has maintained innovation as a core value. But as hard as a few select hardware and software developers have tried, in the face of the difficulty so many people have in using computers as a so-called productivity tool, I ask myself, "Is that all there is?"

I am very disappointed with the direction the settlement is going against Microsoft. It's a deft twist of logic that Microsoft's defense is to protect their right to innovate, when countless elements of their products are ideas that have been either outright copied from others or "dumbed-down" implementations of a similar concept.

I do have respect for the market economy. I do feel that in order to survive, any product must have the right balance of satisfying a need of a customer, and should adequately reward the developer for their efforts required in making such product available. Once innovation stagnates, however, I don't see the value to the economy as a whole in merely churning profits, particularly in the computer industry, which is still in its nascent phase. Products such as wristwatches and bicycles have long since reached a point where their chief functionality has been satisfied, and innovation is less crucial. Moreover, I don't know of many people who are particularly intimidated by either of those products -- something I cannot say of the desktop computer.

It reminds me of the automobile industry some 25 years ago, which seemed rather stale until the rising quality and better cost on imports began to outflank domestic auto giants. The complacency encouraged expensive, inferior products, and once something better did arrive, the industry shift was needlessly abrupt.

I believe that Microsoft's practises have chilled competition. Today, once the Internet browser leader, Netscape, is practically a parody of itself. Java, the "write once, run anywhere" language, is slowly being asphyxiated by Microsoft's ever-changing "standards" and protests. When importing text files from Microsoft products, invariably certain characters are transposed with others -- flying in the face of the ASCII character standard, which, once adopted some 35 years ago, became the foundation of modern computing. Divide and conquer.

As a Canadian citizen, I have no voting power in the United States to

express my opinion on these matters. Nonetheless, computers are the centre of my working career, and I do know that their potential as a business, educational and informational tool has not yet been attained. I do feel that Microsoft's practises have become a barrier to that end, and would like to see that they be appropriately discouraged from continuing to operate as they do.

Sincerely,

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